Chianti

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Chianti

by GlassWendigo

Summary

Will has gotten dragged into yet another case he would prefer to have never been a part of. A killer is on the loose, nothing new for Will. But this killer is noteworthy for his victimology- they only kill alpha-omega pairs in which one partner has been unfaithful. Dr. Lecter is called in to offer a second perspective and help Will bear the weight of the murderer's psyche. As the case drags on, the two are brought closer and closer to danger- and to each other.

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Slow burn A/B/O case fic.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Emergence

Deep inhale. Deep exhale.

Dark. Light. Dark. Light. Dark.

The pendulum clears from his vision. Will takes in a shaky breath as his eyes snap open. The crime scene that was before him moments ago dissipates, the clock rewound to mere moments from before the murder was committed. It waits for him to step into place, for him to become the killer. Will considers the empty room around him for a moment, takes another breath, and allows himself to slip into the psyche of the murderer who so artfully laid out the atrocity Will was called upon to view.

The scene starts, his role assigned and filled, and Will goes through the motions of recreating the wretched scene laid out before him. A young omega and alpha lay tangled in a bed together before him. The girl's parents are on a business trip out of town. They find security beneath the fluffy duvet spread over the omega's bed. They aren't subtle in their actions, about what just came to pass between them. Whispered promises pass between the two of them, ones that are unlikely to be fulfilled. There's a reason mating bites rarely seem to take at so young an age.

The killer slips into the room, silent, barely breathing - *seething,* if they breathed at all - simmering with rage just beneath the surface. One step. Another. A third, and the murderer is nearly upon them. The sweetness of the omega's voice and roughness of the alpha's tone blend in low murmurs. The lovers lie blissfully unaware of the fate that is yet to befall them. Will's nose twitches as he comes closer—strong scents from the pair, not so from the killer.

"I enter the room unnoticed, silent. My victims—no, my *prey,* are otherwise occupied, which makes it all the easier for me to approach them."

Will makes a violent move forward. The alpha's throat is slit before he has a chance to bare his teeth at the intruder. The omega screams but is silenced just as quickly with a hand wrapped around her throat. This, this is not the killer making his art. Not yet. The medium must first be prepared. With the omega choking through her last breaths and eventually going still, the killer can begin.

“I quickly take care of the alpha, so he poses no threat. The omega… she screams, which is so *annoying* . I was planning to kill her as quickly as her pathetic alpha, but she just had to raise a racket. She deserves to be punished for such an offense.”

Will feels words spilling from his lips, explaining the killer’s process and thoughts as the killer moves on to creating their tableau. He hardly registers that he makes a noise at all.

The scene laid out before him is nothing short of *precise.* This was planned. This was mapped, it was no spur-of-the-moment decision. The omega, laid upon the alpha, is the first to be ascended to the higher purpose of becoming true art. The omega is a pretty little thing, all blonde curls and sky-blue eyes left clouded and unseeing. Her pale, creamy, unmarred skin glows in the moonlight as she is shifted and dragged from the bed. Careful hands carve out all that makes her an omega- her womb, her canines, her scent gland. Once the pieces are removed from the corpse, the omega is propped up on her knees. Her hands are cupped, and the pieces carved from her are put in her open hands. A gift, an offering.

The alpha is the clear recipient of her offering. He’s handsome, with dark skin, dark eyes, and a hard jawline. He’s clearly an athlete, judging by his musculature. One of his hands is outstretched, reaching for the proffered sacrifice. Held behind his back is his heart, carved out of his chest and carefully cupped in his other hand. His canines have also been removed, although they appear to be missing from the scene.

“- I make the omega suffer for the affections of her alpha, the affections she hasn’t earned. An omega should offer all they are to their alpha. This is the natural order of things.This is my design,” Will mutters, blinking out of the daze he was in. He’s on the entire opposite side of the room that he began on.

Jack Crawford watches on, stone-faced as normal. A local police officer stares at Will with an expression that can only be described as the midpoint between disgust and unease. Beverly looks intrigued, at the very least.

Price is the first to pipe up.

“Well, Will seems to be right. The omega did suffer. Blood spatter and defensive wounds indicate she was still alive when everything started. She was definitely dead by the time her heart was removed, though. We’ll have to do an autopsy to determine when exactly in the process she died.” Price breaks the tension in the room, dragging the attention away from Will.

“And the girl was apparently messing around with another alpha,” Beverly adds, helping Will piece together the killer’s motivations.

“So why kill the alpha, too? It's not like he did anything wrong,” Jack asks, looking to Will for an explanation.

Will takes a moment to answer, trying to find the words with everyone in the room staring at him. He's far from comfortable being stared at, even after all his time working with the FBI.

“Because the alpha failed, too. He couldn’t keep control of his omega,” Will offers. “That’s why the alpha was mutilated, too. Neither of them served their ‘natural’ purpose. The omega didn’t wholly submit and dedicate herself to her alpha, and the alpha couldn’t control his omega or satisfy her.” The answer seems to be accepted by Jack, and everyone goes back to what they were doing before the interruption.

Will exhales and messes with the collar of his usual button-up. The air in the room is stale and slightly cool. The coming autumn has put a chill in the air. The coppery smell of blood and the scent of decay and fear are heavy in the air. Will feels sweat beading on his forehead as the forensic techs chatter on.

It’s all very loud and grating. The constant talking and low murmurs feel thunderous in his skull. The combination of the various scents in the room makes Will’s stomach churn. The view in front of him disgusts him as much as it fascinates him. He averts his eyes. It keeps getting harder to *look.* Will clears his head, trying to avoid getting any more overwhelmed.

“I-I need a minute,” Will mutters, directed at Jack Crawford. Jack grunts noncommittally and waves him off.

Will gratefully escapes from the stuffy room, overcrowded with forensic personnel from both the local police force and the FBI. He passes through the hall, brushing off any attempts to start a conversation. He walks out to the front porch and leans against the railing. Will shudders slightly as a cool breeze nips at him, drawing his coat a little closer and his scarf a little tighter around him. He sighs, takes his glasses off, and rubs at his eyes. He's had a pounding headache at every scene Jack has called him to recently. He shoves his glasses back on, runs a hand through his hair, and looks up.

His breath mists in the air and fogs his glasses, but that doesn't obscure his view so badly that he can't recognize the Bentley pulling up to the crime scene. Will takes a bottle of aspirin out of his pocket and shakes two out. He tips his head back and swallows them, pocketing the bottle again as Hannibal parks among the various vehicles on the taped-off lawn.

Will raises an eyebrow as Hannibal steps out of his car. He's wearing a particularly ostentatious plaid suit today, nearly ugly. It wouldn't work on anyone but him. The man has a propensity for finding the most atrocious patterns when he goes to the tailor's and then making them look undeniably elegant.

The good doctor smiles as he notices Will standing on the wraparound porch. His scent is subdued today, so Will guesses he had an appointment with a patient this morning. Still, Will manages to catch a whiff of nicely-aged Chianti, lacking the alcoholic edge that Will could pick up on with a glass of the real stuff. There are other notes- some sort of spice, something like amber, and a hint of coppery metal. The alpha's scent is incredibly distinct, and he seldom hides it- unlike Will, who covers his at every opportunity. Will can practically hear Hannibal commenting on his aftershave for the hundredth time.

"Good morning, Will. Jack called me in for a second set of eyes on the scene. Would you care to join me, so we can compare notes?" Hannibal requests, the words rolling off of his tongue in his odd European accent.

Hannibal is as he always is as they enter the crime scene, the man entirely unflappable. The scene hardly seems to faze him. He walks around the room, stopping every now and then, sharp eyes taking in the details of the gory tableau. He quietly explains what he sees to Jack, offering little more insight than Will did, but agreeing with him on every point.

"So, do either of you think this is the Ripper? Will, you mentioned this is like art to the killer. Isn't that what the Ripper does? Make his victims into art?" Jack asks, a bit too loudly. Will

watches as a local police officer less-than-subtly begins eavesdropping. This is bound to end up on Tattlecrime in no time. Hell, Will wouldn't be surprised if Freddie Lounds already made her way over to the crime scene to snoop around.

Hannibal glances towards Will, seeming to defer to his opinion. Will can feel those sharp, keen eyes on him. The doctor's gaze has always been disconcerting.

"No," Will answers definitively. "No. This isn't the Ripper. The alpha and omega have both had organs removed with nearly surgical precision, but the organs were merely moved around, not taken entirely. Only the alpha's canines are missing. And this… this isn't his kind of art. This is about the subjugation and submission of the omega. It's about punishing the alpha for his inadequacy. The Ripper would punish rudeness, but this killer is trying to make a point about status."

Will's eyes flick up to briefly meet Hannibal's piercing gaze. He catches hints of pride, as if Hannibal is impressed with him. Will looks away, back towards Jack.

"Is that all?"

———

Hannibal and Will exit the crime scene together without much fanfare. It's the first in what Will is sure will be a string of violent murders. The killer was entirely too organized and unemotional about the crime he committed. Will doubts that he knew the victims well. The killer simply saw an opportunity to create his art, to send his message, and he took it.

Will can still feel Hannibal's eyes on him. The alpha has barely looked away from him since he arrived at the crime scene this morning.

"Will I be seeing you at our usual appointment tonight?" Hannibal asks, breaking the silence.

Will considers his answer for a moment before he replies. He would much rather go home to Wolf Trap to spend time with his pack. But Hannibal has been nothing but kind and helpful to Will so far. The pack can wait for a while longer.

“Sure. And it’s not an appointment. It’s a conversation,” Will corrects him. He can see Hannibal’s usual expression warm with a flicker of amusement.

“Tonight, then.” The doctor confirms.

A "Conversation"

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal move on to converse in Hannibal's office. Will draws some conclusions, Dr. Lecter draws some of his own.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will steps out of his Volvo V70 at around 6:30 in the evening, just in time for his "conversation" with Dr. Lecter. He brushes off the dog hair he's sure to have accumulated while sitting in his car. The dogs enjoy the occasional late-night joyride with Will when he wants to mindlessly drive around the back roads of Wolf Trap. The biggest (and so far, the only) issue of great note that Will has with his dogs is the amount of shedding the furballs manage to do. Fur of six different types is a hard accessory to pull off, even with a flannel and jeans. That, and he can practically see Hannibal's careful expression of mild displeasure from the day Will first attended one of these 'conversations'— the man had not been a fan of the massive amount of dog fur Will left in his wake on the chair Will briefly sat in before getting up to explore the room. Will refuses to carry around a lint roller in his car, preferring to just leave the dog fur. It's a losing battle, anyway. The only person Will even makes an effort to dust himself off for is the good doctor himself.

Will knocks on the door at 6:32, just late enough to be slightly annoying, but not quite late enough to be considered rude or inconsiderate. It's a habit of Will's, making sure he's just late enough to make Hannibal feel not quite as important as he usually does. Will has had the misfortune of running into Dr. Lecter's other patients and friends outside of sessions a few too many times, and he's always accompanied by Hannibal himself. The way they laud him and practically throw themselves at him in public always makes Will vaguely uncomfortable. Does no one consider doctor-patient confidentiality to be of any importance around the man? Yes, Hannibal is intelligent and cultured, but you would think propriety was thrown out the window the moment anyone who's even mildly acquainted with him makes eye contact with him. Will isn't one much for propriety, or even society's base rules, necessarily, but he knows the importance of a firm boundary. Every time Hannibal is approached in public, Will is forced to wonder what's going on behind his polite facade. No man can be *that* tolerant.

Will knocks at the door, bare knuckles rapping against the dark oak. He stands in the cold for another mere moment, just long enough for Hannibal to walk from his desk to the door. Will shivers in the meantime.

"Will. Come in."

Hannibal, having come to expect Will's token lateness, is unperturbed as he opens the door to greet the empath. He offers Will a small smile and steps aside to let the omega into his office. Will enters, briefly stopping at the coat rack to hang up his jacket and scarf. The nearby alpha's scent wafts to him, present but not overpowering. He must not be wearing scent blockers. Will isn't a patient, after all. Hannibal doesn't owe him the same level of professionalism he affords his patients. Will doesn't even pay him for these 'conversations', so Will feels like he shouldn't complain. The scent isn't terrible, anyway. And if it makes Hannibal comfortable, Will doesn't mind.

The office is pleasantly warm despite the cool autumn air outside, but not stuffy. It's a welcome contrast to the crime scene this morning, which circles through Will's mind every hour or so. The killer almost feels like the Ripper, but no organs were missing. Only the alpha's canines.

Will paces about the room, occasionally picking objects up just to place them down again, often in slightly different orientations than they were before. Once Will feels that he has sufficiently settled into the space, he begins speaking. Hannibal, being incredibly used to this pattern of behavior, waited patiently for Will to end his ritual.

"The alpha was missing his teeth," Will starts, unprompted. He sets down the hardbound book he had idly picked up a moment ago. The cover had been opened, and the book set out. Will had been intrigued by the doctor's recent readings, but the book was written entirely in Lithuanian.

Will leans over the banister of the second floor, looking down at Hannibal. Hannibal looks up at him, patiently waiting for elaboration.

"Not that the teeth were merely removed from his body. No, they were gone from the crime scene entirely," Will adds.

Hannibal seems to consider his words for a moment before replying.

"Yes, I noticed while we were at the scene. The teeth are a somewhat odd trophy to take. The canines are particularly hard to remove, given their biological function."

"And why the teeth?" Will muses. "Sure, it might be symbolic of taking away their defenses, but an omega's teeth are hardly the same threat that an alpha's are."

An alpha's canines are longer and stronger than an omega's or a beta's. They are also more deeply rooted in the gums of an alpha. One evolutionary theory about it lends credence to the idea that these evolutions were to defend a den, an omega mate, or pups. Hunting would have also been the alpha's job. The other primary theory is about the depth of a mating bite. Some omegas have recessed scent glands, so they could have evolved in response to that. Wait. Mating bites. Will exhales softly as he draws the connection between the missing teeth and the killer's apparent motives.

"He was trying to make sure they couldn't mate because they were inadequate," Will murmurs. "He doesn't think they should be able to have anyone, especially not each other. Even in death, he refused them the ability to bond."

“‘He?’” Hannibal asks, raising an eyebrow.

“Yeah. ‘He.’ The killer is male. I think, anyways,” Will sighs, resting his elbow on the banister, and then his chin on his hand. “It’s too early to tell, almost. But the majority of cases like this are the result of male perpetrators. Still, whoever he- *they* are, they need to kill again for us to get a better sense of their victim pool.”

“How unfortunate for the next victims. But I suppose it’s an undeniable truth. Right now the victim types could be alpha-omega pairs, male-female pairs, male alpha and female omega pairs…” Hannibal trails off, and Will mentally runs the list of traits that could determine the next victims. Far too many possibilities remain. But Will has a hunch, based on what he could gather from the crime scene.

“Based on what little we have, I still think it’s based on secondary gender. The killer is angry. They think they’ve been wronged in some way. The more violent nature of the omega’s mutilation suggests that an omega is at fault. In their mind, at least. The next pair of victims will let us in on more information,” Will reasserts his earlier analysis with confidence, slinking toward the ladder to get back down to the first floor.

“And you think they’ll kill again soon because this was a killing out of anger. But the killer isn’t disorganized... Interesting. So an organized killer, likely of above-average intelligence, targeting alpha-omega pairs with a particular proclivity for cruelty towards the omega?” Hannibal summarizes, offering a hand to help Will down the ladder. Will doesn’t take it, but Hannibal is unfazed by the refusal.

“I think. I can’t be sure. Like I said, we just have to wait them out. With any luck, this will be the first and only set of killings.” Will pauses as he puts both feet on the ground.

“We aren’t that lucky,” He adds drily.

Hannibal recognizes the shift in the air as Will seems to move on from talking about the case. He settles in his normal chair, and Will sits down across from him. Will watches some dog fur rub off of his sleeve and onto the arm of the chair. Oh, well. He turns his attention back to the doctor.

“Now, how are you doing on a more personal level, Will? Still seeing monsters like Garret Jacob Hobbs in the shadows of your room?”

Will rolls his eyes at the way Hannibal phrases it- as if he’s a child hiding from a creature and not a grown man experiencing hallucinations. He sighs again, tipping his head back to stare at the ceiling. He closes his eyes.

“And what if I have? I killed the man, Hannibal. Ask any soldier returning from war and they’ll tell you that they see the face of an innocent they killed in every crowd,” Will mutters, not keen on being asked about Garret Jacob Hobbs for the millionth time. Thankfully, the hallucination didn’t appear at the last crime scene.

“So you think his appearance is a manifestation of your guilt about it? Garret Jacob Hobbs was far from innocent. Besides, I thought you said you felt powerful when you killed Garret

Jacob Hobbs," Hannibal reminds him. Will is beginning to regret those particular words. While it is the truth that he felt powerful, Hannibal refuses to stop bringing it up. Will would rather let that sleeping dog lie.

Will tilts his head back down to look Hannibal dead in the eyes.

"Is one not allowed to feel powerful and guilty at the same time? Take someone in a position of power, any position of power, and ask them. Should a ruler, a king in a high castle, not both enjoy and dread the responsibilities he shoulders? Should an FBI agent not feel both bad for ending someone's life and powerful for saving another?" Will poses. The two men both know he doesn't feel powerful merely because he saved a life. Will refuses to bring up the real reason and Hannibal wants him to reach and verbalize that conclusion on his own.

"Well, a ruler is usually so separated from the people they rule over that they hardly feel the compassion necessary to feel guilty, to begin with."

"Empathy disorder. I don't get that kind of luxury," Will groans, less-than-gently reminding Hannibal, who seems vaguely amused.

"And yet, you still choose to feel powerful. For all the pain and fear that Hobbs must have felt in the moment of his demise, you still chose to tell me you felt powerful in that moment instead of guilty. I must ask you, Will, why would you be the ruler in the high castle choosing pride and power over empathy, when empathy is so readily available to you?"

Will falls silent. He glares at Hannibal, who is looking rather pleased with himself despite having a neutral expression. It shines in his eyes. It's something odd that Will has noticed about the doctor. He seems to delight in Will's darker attributes and ideas. Will stares at Hannibal for a moment, mentally cursing the doctor. He always manages to corner him like this. Will should really stop playing these games of extended metaphors with Hannibal. Will seldom wins them.

Will and Hannibal's phones chime at nearly the same time, breaking the tension in the room.

Will is the first to check his phone, freeing Hannibal from the normal rules of propriety to do the same. Will lets out a deep sigh and opens the new article on Tattlecrime.

Freddie Lounds got into the crime scene in less than 24 hours. And she's already theorizing about it and handing out information the public isn't supposed to know. The beta is a damn nuisance. The FBI didn't really want the public to know about this case so soon. Paranoia will spread like wildfire as soon as another body or two confirms the presence and M.O. of a new serial killer. Will mutters a curse and stands, skimming the article and already moving towards the door. His phone rings, and a name is displayed across the top of the screen just as he had expected.

Jack Crawford.

Will exchanges a look with Hannibal, who gets up to accompany him to the door, a little bit too close for Will's comfort.

“Looks like we’ll have to cut this short. I’ll see you soon, Hannibal.” Will gathers his coat from the rack before accepting the call and waving at Hannibal as he exits, the alpha hot on his heels to walk him out. God knows the flame-haired beta probably contaminated the crime scene.

“Goodbye, Will,” Hannibal replies, despite knowing that he won’t be heard over the loud voice of Agent Crawford beginning a rant about Freddie Lounds and Tattlecrime and how local police *just can’t keep it in their pants*. Hannibal stands in the doorway until Will is in the Volvo and pulling out of the driveway.

Hannibal turns to walk back in, gently closing the door behind him. He has a lot to write about Will from this session. The omega gets more interesting by the day. Hannibal stops at the coat rack, noticing the scarf the omega left behind. Hannibal gently picks it up and takes in the scent on the fabric.

Will is definitely sick. Encephalitis, if Hannibal is correct. He wonders if that has anything to do with how forgetful Will was with this scarf. No matter. The encephalitis will give Hannibal a chance to move forward with his plans a bit more quickly than he originally intended to.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys! So I might have lied about only updating once every 1-2 weeks. I have a lot of inspiration right now creatively (thank god). So, here's a new chapter. I know it's kind of boring right now, but it's a slow burn. I have to set the plot up before I can push the first domino and watch them all fall. This is also like the only week I don't have an academic essay due so I'm seizing the chance to write for fun. As always, constructive criticism is welcomed and encouraged. I have no beta, so all grammar and spelling mistakes are entirely my own.

Constructs

Chapter Summary

Jack rants, Will grades papers, and two new bodies appear.

Chapter Notes

As always, I don't have a beta so all spelling and grammar errors are my own! Feel free to leave constructive criticism, a comment, or a kudos if you enjoy this chapter :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Freddie Lounds is, without a doubt, the biggest thorn in Jack Crawford's side (apart, of course, from the Chesapeake Ripper himself). Jack feels the intense urge to make everyone in his general vicinity aware of this. Loudly. And frequently. All this is to say that Will should have been back in Wolf Trap a long while ago, and Jack Crawford simply cannot shut up about the redheaded beta journalist. The man can possibly only talk at greater length about two people: his wife and the Ripper.

Beverly gently nudges Will with her knee. Will subtly glances at her, not wanting to be the next recipient of Jack's wrath. Beverly has her phone on her thigh, pulled up to a timer. *43:16* . Jack has been talking for nearly an hour about being cautious of "interlopers" while at the crime scene. The other agents and officers at the table are trying their best to look innocent and attentive. Will spotted the guilty officer the moment Jack began talking about Lounds. The man is from the local PD and didn't know any better. Still, he's the reason the rest of them were dragged here to be lectured. Will sighs heavily, removes his glasses, and cleans them with the edge of his shirt. He's got a splitting headache and the volume of Jack's complaints does not ease it. Will puts his glasses back on and brushes his dark hair a bit further down, enough to shadow the area beneath his brows.

Then he closes his eyes and wades into the quiet of the stream. Jack's yelling ceases to fall upon listening ears. Will pictures himself standing in the center of the rushing water, up to his calves in the coolness of it. He doesn't give a damn about Freddie Lounds, or Jack Crawford, and certainly not the Ripper while he's here. They don't exist in this particular recess of his mind. The dappled sunlight, the mountains over the horizon, the thick forest and stream teeming with fish —this is all *his* , a place uniquely untainted by the disturbed psyches he merges to his own on the daily.

Will hums softly and casts, landing the line downstream in a part of the river choked with grass. He has seen large fish swimming there before. He patiently waits for something to take

the bait he put on the hook to entice a bite.

He feels a warm breath on the back of his neck, and his ears prickle with the sound of an animal huff. He freezes. The stream in his mind is a construct. Only he controls what is here. He didn't put anything that large here.

He slowly turns, looking behind him, and he gasps, dropping the fishing rod into the stream and scrambling a step back.

The large, dark stag that he occasionally sees from the corner of his vision looms over him. The creature is a massive beat of obsidian feathers and fur. And Will most definitely did not invite it to this part of his mind. He tries to will it away for a second, but the creature stubbornly remains. It's like a stubborn ink blot against the idyllic landscape of the stream. Will tries to back away, but the creature follows. Step by step, wading in the river like it belongs there.

Will startles out of the vision, sweating profusely. His heart is racing. He hopes he made no noise. Beverly gives him an odd look. Jack seems to be finishing up with his tirade. Will looks away from Beverly and shifts his position slightly. He's fine. Everything is fine.

Jack finishes his rant and waves the agents and officers off. He's clearly still furious. Will stands, intent on keeping his head down and getting out of the room as quickly as possible. Price and Zeller brush by him, and then Jack fixes his gaze on Will.

"Not you. You stay," Jack grunts, gesturing for Will to return to his seat. Price exchanges a sympathetic glance with him, and Beverly visibly winces on her way out the door.

Once everyone clears out of the room, Jack's attention is solely focused on Will.

"I know you know who spoke with Ms. Lounds. Please politely remind them of the importance of keeping their mouth shut before press releases."

Will nods, and Jack starts putting away the various files he laid out. Will takes that as his cue to leave. He doesn't let out a relieved exhale until he's exited the building. He certainly doesn't speak with the officer who let the information slip. Jack is intimidating enough to have driven the point home all on his own.

Will gets into his car and cranks the AC up after slinging off his jacket. He's sweated through his shirt despite the coolness of the autumn. He pauses after he does so and raises a hand to his forehead. Feverish. His heart drops momentarily until he remembers he's on suppressants. No way for him to have a heat. He must just be sick. He fumbles for his jacket in the back seat and reaches into the right pocket of it. His shoulder aches momentarily from old wounds as he reaches back. He retrieves a bottle of aspirin and takes the last dose of it in the bottle. He mentally notes that he needs to pick some more up the next time he goes into the store.

He glances at his mirrors to back out, and a shadow catches his eye in the rearview. He whips his head around, startled. There's nothing in the backseat but his jacket. But he could have sworn…

He checks his mirror again, and the hazy, shadowy figure sharpens into a clearer image. The haggard face of Garret Jacob Hobbs stares at him from the back. Will looks at the backseat a second time. It remains deserted. The Minnesota Shrike is nowhere to be found. Unnerved, Will checks the mirror to find it clear. He shakes off the jitters from the apparent hallucination of the man and puts the car into reverse.

Will is given the grace of a small break from all of the consulting. The Ripper hasn't gone on a spree in a bit, so there's nothing new to add to the profile. The alpha-omega killer seems to have gone dormant for now. Will is able to more firmly hitch himself to the post of teaching and lecturing to his students. Some of them are budding young minds, among the sharpest the government can offer. Others are… less so.

One of the biggest downsides to teaching is the sheer amount of grading that comes along with it. Will crosses out an entire paragraph of an incomprehensible —practically *unreadable* — essay and simply scrawls a *"NO"* next to it. Sure, it may be harsh, but Will sincerely doubts that the student paid even an ounce of attention to his lectures. He further doubts that this particular student has an ounce of common sense to his name. After firmly marking the paper with a failing grade, he scrawls an additional comment on the rubric.

"See me after lecture on Thursday."

He flips to the next one and sighs softly. This student has an identifiable thesis, which is already a blessing. He recognizes the student's name and connects it to an alpha girl who sits in the back and takes notes like her life depends on it. She's not naturally as gifted as some of his students are in the world of profiling, but she works hard and does well. She receives one of the better grades he's given out this evening.

Of course, the peace of essay grading doesn't last forever. The ringing of Will's phone interrupts his careful reading of an error-ridden essay. He glances at the contact name and lets out a few choice words. He had been foolishly hoping it was Beverly, Alana, or even Hannibal who was calling. He's not so fortunate. He picks up the call and sighs heavily.

"Who's dead and where do I need to go?" Will simply asks, already putting the stack of papers he has to grade to one side.

"Another alpha-omega pair. I need you in Baltimore *now,* " Jack demands before hanging up.

A little over an hour and a half later, Will is freezing his ass off outside a house in Hampden. This time, Hannibal meets him on the driveway.

"Have you been in to the scene yet, Doctor Lecter?" Will asks asks him as they ascend the steps to the small, screened in porch.

"Not yet. I was waiting for you to give your evaluation," Lecter replies simply.

Hannibal does this thing that Will simultaneously adores and despises when they're at crime scenes together. He always leads in front of Will, his presence and demeanor causing the

various agents and technicians to part for him like water. Will tends to squeeze by the agents and techs when alone, and is sometimes blocked entirely by them. Hannibal commands the space and they get through easily when he leads. It makes things easier for Will. Part of Will recognizes it's something instinctual, but the angrier parts of him hate that Hannibal so easily has the respect that Will deserves. Will isn't some rookie profiler shadowing a more experienced man, Will is the reason the FBI keeps catching these crazed killers. Sure, Hannibal is helpful, but Will got along just fine before the alpha came into his life. Well, he thinks so, anyway.

Hannibal opens the door of the room containing the crime scene. A bathroom, this time, connected to the master bedroom. Maybe for easy cleanup?

Then Will gets a good look at the bodies. Most definitely not for an easy cleanup. There's blood everywhere. This killer is awfully confident in their ability to keep their DNA and fingerprints to themselves, much to Zeller's chagrin.

The glass shower stall is shattered from the outside in. The metal frame of it remains standing, used as a makeshift scaffold for the killer's latest statement.

Will closes his eyes and lets the scene fade from around him. He enters the mind of the killer from some hours ago. There are no techs roaming around. Hannibal isn't there. Just him, and the alpha-omega pair. The pendulum swings. Dark. Light. Dark. Light. Dark.

Will opens his eyes.

"I enter through the front door. The house doesn't have any security systems and the two occupants are occupied with themselves. I scoped the home out earlier, checking for any sort of security system or dog. To my delight, there are none to be found. I creep through the living room and down the hall, obscured by shadow. Not that there are any observers to see me, but I'm cautious."

In his mind's eye, Will rounds the corner of the darkened hall to face the door to the master bedroom. He quietly opens the door and slips in.

"Here is where it becomes dangerous. I could be seen and caught out. My victims may not be salvageable mediums if this doesn't go right. The bedside lamp is on, so I can't hide in the shadows as I did previously. I keep my motion slow and calculated, hiding where I can. The alpha and her partner become… joined, and I know my opportunity is at hand. They're loud and distracted, and the shower helps to disguise any noise I might make."

Will finally slips back into the bathroom in the footsteps of the killer. He looks up at the shocked alpha-omega pair and mimes holding and shooting a gun. His hand is steady as he takes aim. There's no hesitation or regret.

"I'm quick this time. I can't afford to waste time strangling them or breaking their necks like last time. It's not about their deaths. I don't want them to suffer in life. They're just the means to an end. I want to *humiliate* them in death," Will seethes.

Will watches the pair get strung up in the pose their bodies have been arranged in. The alpha is on her knees, not dissimilar to the last bodies that were discovered. Her neck is bared, but the mating gland is removed. It wasn't removed cleanly. The neck of the alpha has a gaping hole in it. The alpha's heart has been removed and tossed into the trash can in the bathroom. The omega received a similar treatment. However, the omega is standing and staring down at the alpha, his lifeless eyes held open in death. His scent gland and heart are also missing, but neither has been recovered at the scene. The two are notably still nude, the killer not having bothered to clothe or cover then in any way.

Will startles out of the vision, exiting the killer's mind as quickly as possible. As he finished analyzing the scene, a vicious hatred he could only assume was the killer's overwhelmed his senses. Will inhales shakily and blinks rapidly for a few moments, readjusting to being back in his own mind.

Hannibal is staring intently at him with a small frown. Jack is outright scowling.

"So?" Jack prompts Will. Will takes a breath and arranges his initial thoughts.

"The killer *hates* their victims. Despises them, even. They aren't killing out of jealousy or because they dislike these people on an intimate level. They think something is wrong with this pair, certainly, but they don't know them. The lack of personal motivation suggests that the killer takes issue with a wider group of people that could be in the victim pool." Will pushes his glasses up and turns towards where Katz, Price, and Zeller are crowded around the trash can with the singular heart.

"Who are these two? Are they mated?" Will asks, aiming the question towards that group as he gestures to the two corpses.

"The alpha is a woman named Alma Janson. The omega is Claudius Lorenzen. Both have been previously mated, married and then divorced. They aren't currently mated or married, but they're in a committed relationship with each other. It doesn't seem like either of them were cheating," Katz replies, looking up from the heart she was observing.

"That's a pretty major divergence from the last set of victims," Hannibal concludes, glancing towards Will. His expression is unreadable.

Well, at least the profile can be narrowed down a little bit, in Will's opinion. In some ways, the killer has branched out from the last murders. In others, they have defined themselves a little more. Will frowns at the bodies. What is the killer trying to say? The message is all muddled.

Will meets Hannibal's gaze again. Looks like Will's topic of conversation for their next appointment has been decided for him.

Chapter End Notes

Hey all! I survived the hurricane, my Art History test, and my Developmental Psych. test! Have this as a treat before my next Art History essay is due and I become braindead again.

End Notes

Hey! Thanks for reading this far. This is my first-ever attempt at writing a fic. Constructive criticism is welcome and encouraged! I also have no beta, so please let me know if I have any spelling/grammar errors. I intend to update every week or two, but I'm a full-time college student, so life is chaos. Check the tags, as they are likely to update as the story progresses. Leave a kudos if you feel like it!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!